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Introduction (Theme, Rationale, Significance of the Study)

"I shall never marry, and I dedicate myself to a life of unbroken chastity."

Bhishma took this terrible oath for the sake of his father's desire to get married to a fisherwoman and thus he remained single for the rest of his life. There are numerous examples of singles in society and the same is presented in fictional and non-fictional narratives. The idea of Singlehood is not recent and somehow little difficult to trace its origin because while studying the Hindu religious myths and narratives, the observation says that there are many examples of singles in the Hindu religious myths and stories. Many gods and goddesses are single and never married to anyone. Lord Hanuman is presented as the best example of *Bramhachari*, who remained single and served his master Lord Rama, according to *Parashara Samhita* Lord Hanuman married, when he was learning various vidyas from Sun God, some of these *Vidyas* could be learned by only being married, thus, to complete his education Lord Hanuman married. In Mahabharata, Devavrata is one of the greatest warriors and the only surviving son of Maharaja Shantanu who ceded his rights for his father's happiness and took the terrible oath of lifelong celibacy. Because of his sacrifice, he is known as Bhishma and blessed to live as long as he wanted.

Despite being married, Sita the wife of Lord Rama had to spend her life being a single mother. In today's time, there are thousands of single mothers raising their children. Some of them are divorced, some are widowed and some are unmarried too. Being single for most of them is not a choice rather singlehood imposed on them. But what if someone wants to be single by his/her or their choice? Will that decision be accepted by the culture? What will be the perception of these singles? Whether they will get the same stature as married men or women get? Or will be treated as QUEER only?

Despite an increase in singlehood in recent years, single people today still face stigma and shame, because they don't adhere to the traditional view that marriage is the only standard of living happily ever after and in the existing discourse of marriage-oriented culture, if you choose to be single, then you are a threat to the society and for the same, people may judge you. But still, the concept of singlehood varies and contrary to the above statement, some of them are not only appreciated but also glorified and it is only because of the viewpoint of singlehood. The ranges of perception of singlehood are in society and these perceptions are based on some factors. Some of the important factors that affect the concept of singlehood are as follows: Age, Power, Religion, Gender, Sexuality, and Social Stature etc.

Today, there has been a considerable rise in the number of people living alone or spending their lives being single. Many men and women choose to be single to organize their lives. We say we are independent and can live our lives according to our choices and in our own ways, but are we really independent to choose whatever we want? Or is there something that determines what we should be, whether we should get married or remain single? There is no certainty that the answers to these questions will be in the favour. Research scholars Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson, and Bialeschki stated in their book "Leisure, women, and gender" that "in society, gendered ideologies determine the way in which women or men organize their lives, regardless of whether they're single or married. Gendered ideologies pervade men's and women's lives in unique ways and emphasize the importance of heterosexual couplehood, family relationships, and the necessity to biologically bear and raise children." (Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson, and Bialeschki, 2013:12) In society, Singles are positioned outside the norm; those who chose to be single have an unusually insightful perspective on their wider society's values and institutions. Still, in many housing societies, singles/adults are not allowed to rent or own a house. The perception of Singlehood in

the predominantly marriage-oriented culture is quite dismal, and the same is portrayed in some of the fictional and non-fictional narratives.

Sharada Ugra, a sports journalist writes in her essay, that "Single Indian women were usually housed [...] singlehood translate itself in the movies, books, television, across social whisper. It presented the woman as an entity unfulfilled, incomplete and, leading from there, eventually unhappy [...] would be dark, forlorn, gloomy, unkempt and of course, only half of what a home should be." (Sharma, 2019:14-15) That means the very understanding of singlehood is limited and biased. In this marriage-oriented culture, the image of a single woman is presented in a poor light. Further in her essay, she clears that singlehood is a desired way of life that she learned from her mother.

However, many intersections/versions of singlehood are there and the major focus of this research is the study of how these intersections/versions are constructed through the fictional and non-fictional narratives. Many myths, and discourses about singlehood are constructed through fictional and non-fictional narratives. Therefore, the researcher will observe these discursive practices and will study how these perceptions are formed and getting changed or challenged through the critical study of select, fictional and non-fictional narratives of singlehood and living experiences of singles.

The researcher is considering the following fictional and non-fictional texts as a primary source for his research. DePaulo, Bella, and Bella M. DePaulo. *Singled out: How singles are stereotyped, stigmatized, and ignored, and still live happily ever after*. Macmillan, 2006., Kislev, Elyakim. *Happy singlehood: the rising acceptance and celebration of solo living*. University of California Press, 2019., Klinenberg, Eric. *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise of Living Alone*, 2012., Kundu, Sreemoyee Piu. *Status single: The truth about being a single woman in India*.

Amaryllis, 2018., Sharma Kalpana, editor, *Single by choice Happily Unmarried Women!* Women Unlimited (an association of Kali for Women), New Delhi. 2019. And Tuccillo, Liz. *How to be Single: A Novel*. Simon and Schuster, 2008.

NDTV Women of Worth awarded Sreemoyee Piu Kundu in the category of Literature for her introduction of erotica into contemporary fiction. As well as receiving the United Nations Award for Best Young Writer in 2012, Sreemoyee writes columns on feminist issues for the *Daily O, Yahoo,* and *Mail Today*. Numerous publications have featured her novels and writing, such as *TOI, HT City, Hindu, Indian Express, Vogue, Crest, Open Magazine, Andpersand, Marie Claire, Femina,* and *People Magazine*. In addition, she runs a weekly column, *Dear Shree for Outlook* that focuses on relationships. Among her notable publications are *Faraway Music* (debut novel) 2013, published by Hachette India, *Sita's Curse* (India's first feminist erotica) 2014 published by Hachette India, *You've Got The Wrong Girl!* (lad lit) 2016 published by Hachette India, *Cut: The Death and Life of a Theatre Activist* published in 2019 by Bloomsbury India and *Status Single* (debut non-fiction) was published in 2018 by Amaryllis.

Her non-fiction *Status Single* explores the truths and observations about being a single woman in India. It starts with primary level shaming of the single women in question and moves through 'light-hearted' jokes to "concerning aunties" to graver statistics of the entire society, in general, that makes it extremely hard to live. Whatever a woman does or shall ever do, from her sexuality to her job profile to her marriage profile, it's almost always scrutinized. Throughout this book, each aspect is discussed without sugar-coating.

Eric Klinenberg comes from a Czech-Jewish family in Chicago. After attending the Francis W Parker School, he earned a bachelor of arts degree from Brown University (1993), followed by a master's degree (1997) and a PhD (2000) from the University of California, Berkeley. He was

appointed director of research for the Rebuild by Design competition in 2013. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, published by the University of Chicago Press, was Klinenberg's first book. It describes and analyses the 1995 Chicago heatwave. His second book, *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media*, received high praise for its "political passion and intellectual rigor.

His third book *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* was published in February 2012 by Penguin Press. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Turkish, and Hungarian translations have been made of the book, which has generated considerable discussion. *Going Solo* was featured in Time magazine's cover story as "the number one idea that is changing our lives." Klinenberg has also contributed to *The New York Times Magazine, Rolling Stone, The London Review of Books, The Washington Post, Mother Jones, The Guardian, Le Monde diplomatique, Slate, Playboy*, the radio program This American Life, and the television series Real Time with Bill Maher. This book answers the questions about when and how solo going became so commonplace. Additionally, the book discusses the extraordinary benefits and possible difficulties of singledom - as well as what society can do to improve the lives of the many soloists among us. It is very challenging to closely analyze all his works to explore the issues of singlehood present in them.

The American writer and producer Liz Tuccillo is best known for her work on HBO's comedy series Sex and the City and the self-help book *He's Just Not That Into You* she wrote with Greg Behrendt, which won a Quill Award. She published her first novel, *How to Be Single*, in June 2008, and it was adapted into a feature film in 2016. The WB network aired the 2005 television series Related, written by Tuccillo. In March 2014, her film *Take Care* premiered at South by Southwest. She also directed and wrote the 2008 film *Gone to the Dogs*. In her book *How to Be*

Single, she advocates for people to stop trying so hard to find purpose and just live their lives. There will always be a mess, so just ignore it and go along with it. It sounds difficult, but we should try. In her book review Julia commented that "*How to Be Single* reminds us that being single is *miserable* you'll get dumped, ditched, or treated like dirty; the love of your life will be screwing a dozen other girls, or just one other (his wife), or he might just get cancer and die." This fiction talks about the different aspects of singlehood.

Dr Elyakim Kislev directs the Honours Program at the Hebrew University's School of Public Policy and Government, specializing in minorities, policy, technology, and singles studies. He holds a PhD in sociology from Columbia University and three master's degrees in counselling, public policy, and sociology. The U.S. Department of State Fulbright Fellowship and the Fulbright Scholar Award were given to him. The University of California Press published Kislev's *Happy Singlehood: The Rising Acceptance and Celebration of Solo Living*. In addition to English, the book has been translated into Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew, and Romanian. Among the media outlets which covered Happy Singlehood were *The Washington Post, The Guardian, HuffPost, Cosmopolitan, The Times, Vice, Metro, Globe and Mail, Elle, New York Daily News, CNN, BBC World News, BBC One, BBC Radio, Bloomberg*, and others. Having garnered over half a million readers, Kislev is a regular contributor to Psychology Today.

His book *Happy Singlehood: The Rising Acceptance and Celebration of Solo Living* shows how everyone, no matter what their relationship status, can benefit from accepting solo living. Using interviews, quantitative analysis, and an in-depth analysis of singles' writings and literature, Elyakim Kislev offers groundbreaking insights into how unmarried people thrive in a world where social structures and policies still favor marriage.

Bella DePaulo is a long-time member of Unmarried Equality, and the author of *Singled Out: How Singles Are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After* and How We Live Now: Redefining Home and Family in the 21st Century, among other books. In addition to her "Living Single" blog for Psychology Today, she also writes the "Single at Heart" blog for Psych Central.

In her book, Bella DePaulo debunks the myths of singledom, showing how virtually everything, you've ever heard about the benefits of marriage and the perils of staying single is either grossly exaggerated or just plain wrong. However, single people are not simply victims of this singlism, single people are living happily ever after despite being unfairly treated by the workplace, the marketplace, and the federal tax structure. Singled Out Debunks Ten Myths of Singlehood, Including the myth “The Dark Aura of Singlehood: You are miserable and lonely and your life is tragic.”, “Attention, Single Women: Your work won’t love you back and your eggs will dry up., Also, you don’t get any and you’re promiscuous.” and “Attention, Single Men: You are horny, slovenly, and irresponsible, and you are the scary criminals. Or you are sexy, fastidious, frivolous, and gay.” Thus, the traits of singlehood need to be pondered in this novel.

Randomly searching ‘unmarried single’ on Google returns mostly results related to women and mothers. In the current era, unmarried singles, especially women, are in large numbers and there are a lot of discussions around their existence. According to Census 2011, the number of single women increased by 39 per cent between 2001 and 2011. Recently published book, *Single By Choice: Happily Unmarried Women!* '(Women Unlimited) - edited by journalist Kalpana Sharma, and which is an anthology of essays by 13 women from diverse backgrounds - has captivated women of all ages. In spite of the fact that the essays look at singledom from different perspectives, they all emphasize that being single is not a bad thing. It has personal stories of

women who remained single and followed their life purpose. Many women accepted being single as the best option for them as their lives unfolded; it was not a choice. It also discusses the cons of remaining single and doing your thing: the incessant pressure placed on the parents and the woman by relatives and strangers. In her book review Saumya writes "[...] that being single is easier in India than in the west as, after a certain age, people shut their mouths. In the west, there are pressures to socialise and date on the weekend irrespective of age, something we do not have in India."

Women from different professions and ages share their stories: the youngest is 26 and the oldest is over 70. In this book, the authors share the reasons for their decision not to marry, the pros and cons, how society is changing, and how they feel blessed to have good single and married friends alike. By critically analysing the selected texts the research will try to shed light on the hidden aspects of singlehood.

Research Problem

The present research will try to find out the answers to the following questions:

1) How have the discursive practices helped to construct and perceive singlehood through fictional, non-fictional narratives?
2) What are the differences between lived experiences of singles and the presentation of singlehood in fictional, non-fictional narratives?
3) How are the perceptions of singlehood formed and getting changed or Challenged in the fictional, non-fictional narratives?
4) How have the existing Myths, Legends and Discourses of singlehood been affected by the factors like Age, Power, Social Stature, Gender and Sexuality?
5) What are the intersections of singlehood and how these intersections are perceived?

Hypothesis Statement

The proposed research attempts to study the select fictional and non-fictional narratives of singlehood in order to find out how these authors deal with the issues of singlehood and will addresses the significance of the newly rising single population. The purpose of this research is to understand the concept and the perception of singlehood. The study will also address the following hypotheses:

1) Singles in the fictional and non-fictional narratives are delineated as a threat to society and an unexpected rising queer population whereas there are many important positive connotations too.
2) The presentation and perception of singlehood in the fictional, non-fictional narratives are different from the living experiences of singles. Therefore, the comparative study of the living experiences of singles and the fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood can shed light on the understanding of the presentation and perception of singlehood.
3) The perception of singlehood is constructed through fictional, non-fictional narratives and thus if the narratives are biased then the perceptions are obstinate and the analytical study of such narratives can reprove these perceptions.
4) The factors like Power, Social Stature, Gender and Sexuality affect the myths, and discourses of singlehood thus, a critical study of the relation of these factors with the myths, and discourses of singlehood can challenge the meaning and perception of singlehood.
5) Singlehood is depicted as unproductive or impotent and also is considered taboo. On the contrary, it is also celebrated and even glorified too. Therefore, there are many intersections of singlehood and these intersections can be studied to understand the pluralities of singlehood.

Aims and Objectives

This proposed research will attempt to examine and analyze the select fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood and living experiences of singles to understand the existing discourses of singlehood. The following are the aims and objectives of this research:

1) To understand how the discursive practices have helped to construct and perceive singlehood through the fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood.
2) To find out the differences between lived experiences of singles and the presentation of singlehood in fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood.
3) To study how the perceptions of singlehood are getting changed or challenged in the fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood.
4) To analyze how the existing myths, and discourses of singlehood have been affected by the factors like Power, Social Stature, Gender and Sexuality etc.
5) To investigate the intersections of singlehood and how these intersections are perceived.

Operational Definitions of Terms and Concepts

To facilitate the study in a better manner the researcher proposes to define and interpret various theoretical aspects of the terms and concepts. These include singlehood, singledom, narratives, narrative theory, archetypal approach, mythological approach, comparative method, perception, presentation, power, social stature, gender, sexuality, myth, discourse, discursive practices, etc. The study of these terms will enable the researcher to delve deep into the theoretical considerations of the research problem and more importantly into the understanding of singlehood, its presentation and perception in the fictional and non-fictional narratives.

Review of the Literature

Though there have many attempts to study the concept of singlehood many of the scholars have attempted to explore the reasons for being single in their research. In her article, "No three-tiered wedding cake, no mangalsutra: Single women a growing tribe in India", Kaveree Bamzai, a senior journalist and former editor of India Today says that "Single women are asserting their right to be taken seriously, creating their own sub-culture with books, movies and even organizations dedicated to them." that means to be single is not an easy task for women and single women have to fight for their rights and that clears our understanding that to be single they have to create their own world. This means that the present world does not recognize the single population.

In her Book '*Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice'* Rozana Hertz raises an important Question about the male-centred world and the families without men that, *"What will become of men left without the comfort of families? And if men are no longer needed, will families disappear altogether?"* thus she throws light on the family without men and presents the world of all the single ladies and how they choose their parenthood.

In *The Ramayana* the character of Sita can be seen as a single mother and in *The Mahabharata*, the character of Bhishma is the best example of singlehood who sacrifices his worldly desires and takes a terrible oath of celibacy and remains single for the rest of his life.

There are many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and A-sexual people who cannot marry because of sexuality issues and thus these people choose to be single and the narratives about them may not portray a clear picture thus such fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood need to be understood from a critical point of view.

In many fictional and non-fictional narratives like movies, literature and web series, the portrayal of singlehood can be seen and thus these discourses are constructed from the marriage-oriented culture, therefore, the perception of singlehood is hardly studied from critical approaches and can bring new connotations of singlehood. Many scholars have researched single mothers and the reasons for being single but hardly talked about how these myths, and discourses about singlehood are constructed and perceived.

Hence this research focuses on the analytical study of the existing myths, and discourses of singlehood and will examine the changing perception of singlehood through select fictional, non-fictional narratives and living experiences of singles.

Research Design

The basic method used in the study would be an analytic and descriptive approach. The proposed research "A Critical Study of Discursive Practices of Singlehood in Select Fictional, Non-Fictional Narratives and Living Experiences of Singles" will be based on qualitative research with descriptive textual analysis using narrative theory to discuss literary texts, living experiences and fictional and non-fictional narratives of singlehood. The Foucauldian lens will also be used to understand the discursive practice, power, gender, and sexuality as all the approaches go hand-in-hand in the context of the singlehood narratives to complete the analysis of the contested connotations of singlehood. To decode the existing myths and archetypes of singlehood the researcher will be using the archetypal and mythological approach.

To collect and archive the living experiences of singles, and rural and urban myths of singlehood the autoethnography research methodology will be used by the researcher. Interviews will be taken and recorded to use in this research with the consent of the concerned people. A comparative research methodology will be used to examine the difference between the

presentation and perception of singlehood in fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood and the living experiences of singles for the understanding of singlehood from the social stature, gender and sexuality point of view.

The study will concern the data interpretation of the select fictional, non-fictional narratives and living experiences of singles. The sources will be taken from the library and internet and they can be books, articles, journals, essays, and all kind of written material supporting the researcher's study. The researcher will be taking any information, opinion, theories, and concepts to support the study from the sources.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study is focused mainly on the select fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood and living experiences of singles which underlines the concept of being single or singlehood and develop the understanding through these narratives.

This research will make an attempt to devise the archives of living experiences of only never-married singles to understand the concept and various intersections of singlehood. Another limitation is that the proposed research will be based only on select texts, living experiences and fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood.

Tentative Scheme of Chapters

The following is the scheme of chapters as visualized by the researcher for the study. The study will comprise six chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter will briefly introduce the research problem and define all the related terms and concepts. A brief biographical sketch of all the selected authors will also be attempted in this chapter.

Chapter II: Understanding the Discursive Practices of Singlehood with reference to *Happy Singlehood: The Rising Acceptance and Celebration of Solo Living* by Elyakim Kislev and *How to Be Single* by Liz Tuccillo (2008)

The second chapter will deal with discursive practices of singlehood and will critically examine the rising acceptance and celebration of singlehood in Elyakim Kislev's work *Happy Singlehood: The Rising Acceptance and Celebration of Solo Living* and will discuss how and what are the factors matters to be single in Liz Tuccillo's 2008 novel *How to Be Single.* In this chapter, the researcher will also examine the various aspects of singlehood and how these discursive practices influence the perception of singlehood.

Chapter III: Perceiving Singlehood: Getting changed or challenged in light of *Status single: The truth about being a single woman in India*. 2018 by Kundu, Sreemoyee Piu and *Single By Choice: Happily Unmarried Women!* edited by Kalpana Sharma

This chapter will focus upon the perception of singlehood and how this perception is getting changed or challenged. The researcher will also study a portrait of single womanhood that

helps bridge the gap between glib depictions of sexual adventures and dire warnings of how female independence will unravel society in Kundu, Sreemoyee Piu's 2018 work *Status single: The truth about being a single woman in India.* This chapter will also include the pros and cons of being single discussed in an anthology edited by Kalpana Sharma *Single By Choice: Happily Unmarried Women!* '(Women Unlimited) and will shed the light on the positive side of singlehood.

Chapter IV: Myths and Discourses of Singlehood: *Singled Out: How Singles Are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After* by Bella DePaulo and *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* by Eric Klinenberg

In the fourth chapter the researcher will use Foucauldian lens and archetypal approach to critically analyse the existing myths and discourses of singlehood and how singlehood is stereotyped, stigmatized and ignored in Bella DePaulo's work *Singled Out: How Singles Are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After* and other narratives of singlehood. This chapter will also be discussing the rural and urban myths of singlehood to understand the term and how it is stigmatized and stereotyped.

Chapter V: Intersections of Singlehood: Presentation and Perception in Fictional, Non-Fictional Narratives and Living Experiences of Singles

The fifth chapter accentuate the intersections of singlehood and will discuss presentation and perception of the various intersections of singlehood in the above mentioned fictional, non-fictional narratives and living experiences of singles. This chapter will also be discussing the pluralities of singlehood and how these pluralities are affected by the factors like age, gender,

sexuality and social stature etc. And will also shed light on the difference between the intersection of singlehood presented in fiction and in living experiences of never married singles.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher will pen down the findings of his research

Justification of the Study (Expected Results and Policy Implications)

This research can be justified on the basis that the fictional, non-fictional narratives of singlehood are separately studied from critical perspectives. The researcher has already discussed in the introduction that though singlehood discussed in couple of texts and researches but still there are many intersections of singlehood are there and these intersections needs to critically analyse. The presentation and perception of singlehood in fictional and non-fictional narrative is different. So, it will be an interesting and comprehensive thought to shed light on it. It will also add to the living experiences of never married singles from different age groups and different strata of society and secondary material for the scholars interested in this perception of singlehood. Also, by analysing the existing myths and discourses of singlehood the contemporary perception of singlehood can be well understood. One may gain greater insights into the pluralities of singlehood from which these intersections can be highlighted to give voice to the newly rising singles.

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